



DATE: October 12, 2016

TO: Washington State Board of Health Members

FROM: Diana T. Yu, MD, MSPH

SUBJECT: BRIEFING – ADDRESSING OPIOID MISUSE AND ABUSE

Background and Summary:

Washington State is facing a prescription opioid and heroin abuse and overdose crisis. Data indicate that there are high rates of fatal opioid overdoses in Washington State, with about 600 opioid related overdose deaths each year. This epidemic is disproportionately impacting many communities that already experience health disparities such as American Indian/Alaska Native populations and individuals who are unstably housed.

In response to this crisis, state government agencies, local health departments, professional groups, and community organizations across the state are building networks and capacity to address the issue. Several agency members from the Department of Health's Unintentional Poisoning Workgroup came together to develop the Washington State Interagency Opioid Working Plan. This plan outlines current work that is being done across the state and proposes new actions to scale up the response. In addition, the Governor released an Executive Order this month highlighting the urgency of the opioid crisis and directing state agencies to work with local public health, tribes, and other private and public partners to implement the state opioid response plan.

Dr. Kathy Lofy, State Health Officer, will provide an update on the opioid crisis in the state and provide an overview of the Washington State Interagency Opioid Working Plan and the Governor's Executive Order aimed at reducing opioid abuse and overdose in Washington.

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